

Message Text

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45

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 OMB-01 IO-13 /081 W

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P R 091659Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0995

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USBERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT GW GE SHUM

SUBJECT: MORE DETAILS ON GDR BORDER KILLING

REF: BONN 13243

1. PUBLIC INTEREST CONTINUES TO BE HIGH IN THE AUGUST 5 KILLING OF THE ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER BENITO CORGHI BY GDR BORDER POLICE. FRG BONN GROUP REP (VON ARNIM) HAS PROVIDED US WITH THE ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT AS PIECED TOGETHER BY FRG BORDER OFFICIALS.

2. ACCORDING TO VON ARNIM CORGHI PASSED THROUGH THE GDR CHECKPOINT AT ABOUT 0300 IN A ROUTINE MANNER. HE
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CLEARED FRG AUTHORITIES AND CONTINUED DOWN THE ROAD.

AT THAT POINT, HE WAS APPARENTLY TOLD BY ANOTHER TRUCK DRIVER THAT HE HAD LEFT SOME PAPERS WITH GDR AUTHORITIES AND SHOULD RETURN TO PICK THEM UP. THE BUNDESGRENZSCHUTZ SURMISE THAT GORGHI, WHO HAD CROSSED THE FRONTIER MANY TIMES, REALIZED THAT IT WOULD TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TO TURN AROUND, GO BACK THROUGH FRG AND GDR CHECKS, AND THEN COME BACK THROUGH AGAIN. HE PARKED THE TRUCK ALONG THE HIGHWAY, LEFT ALL OF HIS PAPERS INCLUDING HIS PASSPORT ON THE FRONT SEAT, AND STARTED WALKING BACK DOWN THE ROAD TOWARD THE GDR.

3. CORGHI HAD CROSSED THE BRIDGE AND HAD WALKED MOST OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED METERS DOWN THE FLOODLIGHTED HIGHWAY WHEN HE WAS APPARENTLY CHALLENGED BY GDR POLICE. HE MAY HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO HALT. IF SO, HE MAY NOT HAVE HEARD THE ORDER BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY ROAD NOISE FROM TRUCK TRAFFIC. HE PROBABLY KEPT MOVING TOWARD THE POLICE WHO WERE HIS OBJECT IN ANY CASE. THEY OPENED FIRE. HE WAS CRITICALLY WOUNDED AND DIED ON THE WAY TO THE HOSPITAL.

4. THE GDR POLICE APPARENTLY HAD NO IDEA WHOM THEY HAD KILLED. SEVERAL HOURS LATER, THEY CALLED THE FRG POST TO ASK IF THE ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER WAS COMING BACK FOR HIS PAPERS. THE NEXT DAY, ACCORDING TO VON ARNIM, THEY EVEN CALLED THE FREIGHT COMPANY AND ASKED THEM TO HAVE THE NEXT DRIVER PICK UP THE PAPERS. ONLY AROUND 1700 DID IT DAWN ON THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

5. THE FRG WEEKEND PRESS CONTINUED TO HEADLINE THE SHOOTING, IN ARTICLES GENERALLY OBJECTIVE AND NON-EMOTIONAL IN TONE. A CHIEF THEME APPEARED TO BE THE HOPE THAT NOW THAT EVEN NON-GERMANS CAN BE KILLED BY GDR BORDER GUARDS, PERHAPS WORLD ATTENTION WOULD FOCUS ON THIS DISREGARD OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS. CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO THE POETIC IRONY THAT IT WAS A COMMUNIST WHO HAD TO BE KILLED TO MAKE THIS POINT.

6. SPD BUNDESTAG DEPUTY BRUNO FRIEDRICH PRESENTED A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STATEMENT DEFENDING THE TACTICS OF THE FRG GOVERNMENT IN ATTEMPTING THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS TO CORRECT THE SITUATION AND AVERT A SHIFT FROM THE GRADUALLY THAWING FRG-GDR RELATIONSHIP DURING THE 1970-1975 PERIOD. CDU-CSU OPPOSITION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE HELMUT KOHL ISSUED A STATEMENT THAT WERE HE CHANCELLOR, HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO USE ECONOMIC CLOUT TO GET THE EAST GERMANS TO BEHAVE IN A MORE CIVILIZED MANNER. THE

DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE FRG OF THE CORGHI
KILLING ARE THUS ENTWINED IN THE EFFORTS OF THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO MAKE THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL GOVERN-
MENT LOOK BAD IN SUCH CASES INVOLVING THE GERMAN-GERMAN
RELATIONSHIP.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEATHS, BORDER INCIDENTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BONN13325
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760306-0335
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760873/aaaacлма.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BONN 13243
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORE DETAILS ON GDR BORDER KILLING
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, GE, GC, (GORGHI, BENITO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006